

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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REGIONAL SPECIALISTS ON ENVIRONMENT ADDED TO FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton said today that Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service is designating one of its key persons in each of five regional offices to serve as environmental specialist.

These persons will be responsible for reporting on major projects that have potential for altering or degrading the environment, including activities such as oil well drilling, mining, highway construction, and pesticide applications.

"Wildlife's well-being is closely geared to human well-being," Secretary Morton said. "An environmental failure affecting people often is signaled in advance by fish kills or by the death or disappearance of other wild creatures. Thus it is important that we obtain rapidly all the information we can get regarding potential wildlife problems."

He cited President Nixon's February 8 Environmental Message, which placed heavy emphasis on protection of the Nation's wildlife heritage.

The Service's Division of River Basin Studies already has responsibility for commenting upon the effects that water development projects have on fish and wildlife.

The new regional specialists also will be concerned with review of environmental impact statements prepared by other agencies and with preparation of the Service's own environmental statements.

They will also develop contingency plans for Service personnel to use in responding to environmental emergencies such as oil spills.

The Service has regional offices in Portland, Albuquerque, Minneapolis, Atlanta and Boston. A sixth office, in Denver, is expected to have a similar environmental specialist position when it becomes fully operational in about a year.